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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR,PINT,IN, CE

SUBJECT: G.G.PONNAMBALAM, ATTORNEY IN KARUNANIDHI CASE

RBEF: (A) MADRAS 1951, (B) COLOMBO 3444

1. AS INDICATED REF A, PONNAMBALAM IS EXTREMELY WELL-THOUGHT OF IN LEGAL CIRCLES HERE AND IS CONSIDERED TO BE SRI LANKA'S TOP CRIMINAL LAWYER. CONGEN MADRAS MAY BE INTERESTED IN SOME OF HIS RECENT ACTIVITIES IN POLITICS AND THE COURTS.

2. IN SEPTEMBER, ON BEHALF OF TAMIL DISSIDENTS, HE WON AN UN-EXPECTED VICTORY IN THE HIGH COURT (REF B) WHICH RULED THAT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, IN EXISTENCE SINCE MARCH 1971, HAD NOT BEEN PROPERLY REDECLARED SINCE THE PASSAGE OF A REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION IN 1972. IF THE SUPREME COURT, WHERE CASE IS NOW BEING APPEALED, SHOULD UPHOLD THIS JUDGEMENT, IT WOULD BE SEVERE BLOW TO GOVERNMENT PRESTIGE.

3. BESIDES HIS LEGAL ACTIVITIES, PONNAMBALAM HAS BEEN PROMINENT IN SRI LANKA POLITICS SINCE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE. HE LED HIS OWN TAMIL CONGRESS PARTY FOR MANY YEARS BEFORE MERGING IT INTO THE TAMIL UNITED

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FRONT (TUF), WHICH RECENTLY ADOPTED SEPARATISM AS ITS

ULTIMATE GOL. IN MAY, 1976, HE WAS APPOINTED ONE OF
CO-PRESIDENTS OF TUF. HE HAS DIVIDED HIS TIME IN RECENT YEARS
BETWEEN MALAYSIA, WHERE HIS WIFE OWNS PLANTATION LAND, AND SRI
LANKA, REPORTEDLY FOR TAX REASONS.
REED

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